



Stakeholder Feedback: ILRI's Strategy

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1 SUMMARY

In the four years since the 2013-2022 strategy of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) was initiated some significant changes have occurred, and it is timely to check back in with ILRI's stakeholders to hear their thoughts about ILRI's strategic priorities. This report first summarizes some major global trends and changes among donors, then provides a synthesis of feedback from 35 stakeholder interviews. It is not an in-depth review of the strategy, but instead provides a summary of comments and insights from ILRI's partners, donors, and staff.

Interviewees gave the current strategy document high marks for relevance, clarity, and direction. The strategic objectives and critical success factors also received positive feedback. The 2013 strategy reflected some substantial shifts at ILRI. These continue to be well-regarded as on-target. Although no major revisions to the strategy document were called for, many interviewees thought that small changes in language could bring the strategy more up-to-date with current global priorities. For example, many noted the need to map ILRI's work to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There were also suggestions for a greater emphasis on several topics that have become more heavily prioritized by donors recently.

Comments in this report relate both to the strategy document, as well as to how ILRI is *operationalizing* the strategy. As expected, interviewees spent the majority of their time talking about ILRI's operations, rather than the strategy document. Their comments supported a number of common themes and the report is structured around those themes. The collected set of comments from stakeholders is rich and informative; interviewees gave very thoughtful insights. From a few stakeholders, however, the comments seemed a little outdated – as if the interviewee was talking about an ILRI of several years ago. Those comments are also informative, but may say more about future targets for ILRI's communications strategy rather than changes in strategic direction.

This report begins, in Section 2, with an overview of several current global trends that influence the countries in which ILRI works, as well as the donors and partners on which ILRI depends for its success. Section 3 discusses trends among donors and highlights recent changes in the



CGIAR. Feedback from stakeholders is summarized in Section 4. Comments have been grouped by theme and presented under the headings of ILRI's critical success factors. Appendix A provides a list of the interviewees.

Overall, stakeholders expressed tremendous goodwill and respect for the Institute's role in international agricultural research for development. There was widespread recognition of the changing times and the fact that all CGIAR centers are finding their way in a very different landscape of partners, competitors, and donors. The interviewees' feedback was primarily advice about how to make ILRI stronger, and better able to meet the needs of the poor in the future. It is worthwhile considering, however, the perspective from which the advice comes. Most stakeholders see only their own sliver of the institute, and very few have had experience in the challenges of managing an international research institute with staff in many countries and global remit.

While ILRI management and board members may debate the relative importance of individual comments as they reflect on ILRI's strategic direction, it is also important to use this report to reflect on ILRI's public reputation. There are three reputational messages that came through strongly across the majority of the interviewees. First, most people were concerned that ILRI is not communicating major successes and impacts, and they identified an overly broad agenda as the primary reason for this. Second, many commented that it is timely for ILRI consider a more 'forward' focus on the forecasted and current priorities of the international development community. These two themes are discussed in the first part of Section 4 (see page 5). The third major message was about partnerships and is discussed at the very end of the report. Despite recent work on partnering, stakeholders called out the importance of further improvements in how ILRI shows up as partner.

2 GLOBAL TRENDS

This section provides a high-level update of several major global trends, flagging them for deeper consideration as ILRI considers any further strategic planning. These trends differentially impact smallholder producers, poor households as consumers, businesses of all sizes along agricultural value chains, as well as governments and donors around the globe. They provide important context to the feedback that follows.

FALLING COMMODITY PRICES – Many donors, research institutes, and development organizations are still operating with strategies built on assumptions made in an era of high commodity prices. Instead, economies have been weathering a downward trend in real prices for many commodities. Although agricultural commodity prices are expected to perform slightly better in 2017 than last year, it is important to note that we are getting further and further from the time of the global food crises responsible for prioritizing food security and agricultural development in many donor countries. Since then, other political priorities (e.g. security, refugees) have taken center stage.

DEVELOPING COUNTRY ECONOMIES – Country-by-country, agricultural systems around the world have faced different impacts from falling commodity prices. Food imports in sub-Saharan Africa continue to grow, and lower global food prices may weaken both political economy and economic incentives to invest in domestic production. Oil exporting economies took a particularly hard hit in the last four years, straining national budgets. As a key trading partner, the slowing of growth in China has also impacted the countries in which ILRI works. In the Horn of Africa, drought is causing the largest humanitarian disaster since World War II with four large-scale famines likely this year. In Vietnam, the ag sector has reached a turning point, where there is pressure for higher quality in products and processes, and greater efficiency. Country strategies should reflect significant changes in the last four years in each country where ILRI works.

DEMOGRAPHICS - Population growth and a growing youth population in some countries continue to shift the geography of poverty, as well as change the criteria for potential successful interventions. Recent years have

seen a greater focus to measure impacts on youth and employment, for example.

CHANGING DIETS - Changing diets among the middle class have been linked for years to increased demand internationally for livestock products in order to meet the needs of a growing global middle class. However, there are just as critical changes occurring in the diets of the rural poor in low-income countries. Many of the rural households targeted by ILRI are shifting their expenditures toward processed food and purchased food. We are also seeing a tidal wave of obesity hit developing countries, bringing important new questions about malnutrition and poverty. Livestock is at the heart of issues related to changing diets.

EMERGING MARKETS - Emerging market governments continue to be important partners to the CGIAR. Since ILRI's strategy was put in place, Brazil has been plunged into a deep recession, China's economy is facing new challenges, and India has telegraphed its economic growth by launching a space program (causing some donors to steer away from India as a recipient of their funding despite continuing severe domestic problems with poverty and malnutrition). In the next years, emerging market economies may benefit from improved demand for their exports, but some may suffer from the rising costs of servicing dollar-denominated debt in an era with a strong dollar.

SDGS – While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were not yet finalized when ILRI's strategy was put in place, ILRI (like most international development organizations) has since mapped the strategy to the SDGs.

RISING NATIONALISM – The rise of populism and nationalism has impacts on donors' ability to budget for support of issues beyond their borders, on global trade, and more generally on the potential for multi-lateral fatigue (see Section 3).



3

DONOR TRENDS

ODA – While reported overseas development assistance (ODA) has been on an overall upward trend, several caveats provide important context for CGIAR centers. First, donors are spending more ODA at home. In 2015, the majority of the increase in ODA among OECD donors was spent within donor countries' own borders on refugees (accounting for 9.2% of all ODA that year). As another example, the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund directs GBP1.5 billion of the country's ODA mostly toward UK-based research organizations. Second, there is considerable uncertainty about the future. For example, in the US, likely congressional cuts to the budget of the State Department will impact USAID funding. Turning to look specifically at agriculture, while global public investment in agricultural R&D increased by more than 20% between 2000 and 2008, ODA in agricultural development has now flattened out, with a forecasted downturn in commitments for the coming year. Also important for the CGIAR is a trend demanding more rigorous requirements for showing effectiveness and efficiency of ODA expenditure.

FRAGILE STATE FOCUS – In addition to shifting resources to address challenges related to refugees, donors are increasingly focusing ODA toward security issues and fragile states. In 2015, the top three recipients of ODA were Syria, (\$4.9bn), Afghanistan (\$4.3bn), and Pakistan (\$3.8bn). ODA funds to least developed countries all together rose by nearly 8% from 2014-2015.

AG-RELATED FUNDING – Donors are increasing their funding of priorities *related* to agriculture, even though

ODA specifically for agricultural development appears to be declining. Some research institutions are changing how they talk about their work, and their strategic emphasis to move beyond agricultural productivity. Nutrition, food systems, and climate change are under the spotlight as higher priorities. Additionally, there has been recognition of the importance of employment and youth, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Consideration of gender in agriculture by donors has also changed recently.

CLIMATE - Although the Green Climate Fund is not a recent development, it has garnered the attention of the international development community in the years since ILRI's strategy was put in place. With the 2017 addition of resources from the United States, the GCF now has \$10 billion at its disposal. It has been slow to mobilize, however, with accreditation currently of only thirteen "national implementing entities." The global focus on climate change has significantly increased since this strategy was put in place. In the last four years, we have seen the signing of the Paris Agreement of 2015, the beginning operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, increasingly erratic weather, prioritization of climate-smart agriculture by the World Bank, and a higher prioritization of environmental and resource efficiency issues generally among donors. This is notwithstanding the current US administration's position. In the livestock for development field, donors express a continued need for high caliber research at the nexus of livestock systems, poverty, malnutrition, and climate change.

MULTILATERAL FATIGUE - Multilateral aid agencies will, of course, remain an important cornerstone of funding for international development, but there are some key trends to keep an eye on as ILRI plans for the future. Many agree that multilateral aid agencies struggle with overlapping mandates, governance challenges, and their ability to show efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, wealthy-country governments funding





multilaterals are, as stewards of public money, raising the bar on efficiency of expenditure, and documentation of impacts from their investments. Added to an already struggling system, we see recent trends toward increased nationalism and higher percentages of ODA spent within the borders of donor countries themselves. Donors are increasingly finding it politically preferable to expend ODA through bilateral channels or more targeted financing mechanisms. This allows them to focus on specific issues, geographies, and standards of reporting tailored to their needs. These trends are especially difficult for organizations further from on-the-ground impact in the research-to-delivery continuum. Compared to development organizations, research institutes face inherent difficulties in demonstrating effectiveness and efficiency. There is an important unmet need for well-designed financing mechanisms to enable funding to flow to global agricultural research, while still meeting the current demands faced by donors. In the meantime, CGIAR Centers must adapt.

AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION – Recently, some larger donors (BMGF and USAID), governments, and a range of development organizations have adopted a greater focus on ‘agricultural transformation.’ While raising productivity remains central in donors’ strategies, there has been a shift from the commodity-focused to people- and household-focused. Household income is increasingly targeted as a metric, with greater attention to markets, jobs created, trade, on-farm/off-farm dynamics, economic choices of poor households, and the policy environment needed to foster transformation in rural economies. Likewise, value chain analyses of commodities remains central, but the agricultural transformation lens requires consideration of tradeoffs across commodities, at a more systems-level landscape and between agriculture and other economic activities.

There has been a renewed focus on place-based strategies, working with national governments, and attention to political economy and policies. A shift has also occurred to expand policy work beyond traditional agricultural policies to consider the wider range of policies that impact the agricultural sector (including infrastructure, trade, and finance). It may be an important conversation for ILRI to consider whether its strategy language and priorities align with an agricultural transformation lens.

CGIAR TRENDS

In addition to changes in the donor landscape, there has been a continued evolution of the CGIAR System. In 2016, a new governance model was welcomed by many as a turn in the right direction. In parallel to enthusiasm for the changes, however, there is continued fatigue among staff at CGIAR Centers. The governance structure will continue to require the time and energy of CGIAR staff in order to operationalize it in a way that works for both Centers and Donors. Perhaps most importantly, there are still critical changes needed to operationalize the new structure in ways that work within the practical reality of declining W1/W2 funding and donors’ heightened need for efficiency and evidence of impact.

Now that the CRPs are up and running, it may be a good time for a hard look at how they are funded and managed. Nearly all stakeholders (CGIAR staff and partners) agree the CRPs have led to greater levels of collaboration among Centers, and augmented the CGIAR’s unique value as global network of researchers. However, the CRPs were constructed without anticipating the continued decline in W1/W2 or higher standards for donor’s needing to report progress and impact. The real test of the new governance model will be whether it supports processes in the CGIAR System where tough questions need to be asked, and the CGIAR community needs to arrive at practical answers together.

While these changes in the CGIAR System move along, ILRI’s own strategic planning may need to continue its focus on mitigating risks, minimizing the costs of the uncertainty, investing in a vibrant working culture for staff, and building a strong and resilient Center.

4

FEEDBACK

This section describes the feedback of 35 stakeholders interviewed for this project. The sample was not fully representative of the diversity of ILRI stakeholders and their comments, summarized below, should be read as catalysts for further discussion, rather than directives. Because the nature of the interviews was to provide an opportunity to offer advice, many comments began with *'ILRI should...'* Crowd-sourced advice like this offers rich and informative insights, but it is not always balanced with a fuller picture of the constraints of running a research institute in a highly complex donor, managerial, and delivery environment. Importantly, though, the feedback in this section provides a clear view of the reputation of ILRI. In addition to offering food-for-thought about strategic direction, the feedback provides a valuable indication of where to target strategic communications to build ILRI's reputation.

The section begins by discussing two over-arching messages that were so often repeated they deserve to be separately highlighted. Other common themes of feedback follow, organized according to ILRI's *critical success factors*.

TWO BIG MESSAGES

BREADTH – Most of the interviewees at some point expressed concerns that ILRI's current strategy and scope of work is too broad. One person referred to ILRI's *'oceanic remit.'* These views were most often accompanied by the view that this breadth may be compromising ILRI's ability to: (1) show high-profile, concrete, successful impacts in the near term; and (2) define a sharper institutional identity. Another stakeholder noted: *'What doesn't ILRI do? ILRI has to decide what they are.'*

One person described how delivering impact requires both a solid portfolio and discipline around the pipeline that keeps directing it over time toward the most impactful outcomes. He felt ILRI could improve on both. Another said, *'They have fantastic people. But they are so donor-driven that they are not able to show impact, innovation, or relevance.'* One person asked whether ILRI had practical and operational delivery targets (i.e. targets for delivery, not poverty reduction) and accountability among staff for progress toward targets. Many wanted to see ILRI working toward delivering outputs that make it

'indispensable,' finding the part of the international agricultural research landscape in which to operate where the Institute ensures its relevancy for many future generations.

Several important qualifying points were made related to this topic of breadth. For example, many noted that without unrestricted funding, donor-reliant organizations *must* be opportunistic in order to survive, bending their programs to the current political climate, research topic, or geography that aligns with donors' priorities. As another caveat, some interviewees said ILRI's successes exist, but that the impacts are not being properly documented or effectively communicated.

FORWARD-LOOKING – The second general message that came through strongly was concern about whether ILRI's strategic priorities are sufficiently forward-facing. Many stakeholders noted how rapidly livestock systems are changing globally, and identified the critical need for cutting edge research about how poor households engage in, and are impacted by, these changes - including interactions around climate change, diet, nutrition, commercialization and private sector opportunities, rural employment, and gender. ILRI's systems research was highlighted by many as central to the new turn in donor agendas, and these areas of research were seen as good bets as to where ILRI might make itself indispensable (whereas in many areas of biosciences, stakeholders noted that ILRI has less of a comparative and competitive advantage).

Included in the calls for forward-looking discipline, many advised a hard look at the institute's legacy programs. When asked about the comparative advantage of ILRI, one interviewee noted: *"By default you can have comparative advantage in legacy programs, but that doesn't mean that's where you should continue to place your resources."* Many saw the legacy programs as detracting from ILRI's ability to communicate a sharper institutional identity as a forward-looking institute. One person thought ILRI's legacy programs constrain the institute from sufficiently addressing current priorities articulated by national partners, and that this may have negative impacts on national partnerships. *'Instead of partnering around the agenda of multiple national governments, ILRI has this legacy set of old projects it tries to get the NARS to pick up and deliver.'* Another noted: *'ILRI should go in and clean out the deadwood - the old legacy programs that are still limping along. Some of this work should be at a university, or a non-profit, but not at a global research institute tackling the big issues of our time.'*

FIT FOR PURPOSE

GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS – Many stakeholders noted the challenges ILRI faces in being a *global* research institute, while having *national* impact in the translation of research to local contexts. Similar to the conversations about legacy programs, many people noted problems with ILRI’s legacy of an East Africa-focused identity. However, when pressed for ideas about how to change this, the ‘chicken-egg’ nature was noted, whereby ILRI cannot compete for donor resources if it doesn’t have a presence in the region, but it cannot build a presence without resources. The most common advice on this topic was to selectively expand, based on the potential for nearer-term successes with development impacts that can contribute to reputation-building. *‘ILRI cannot be focused if it works in every country. It needs to have ‘wins’ in particular places and then be invited to participate in other geographies based on its track record.’* The majority of interviewees supported expansion of ILRI’s work in West Africa. Some advised less of a strategic focus on China which was seen as delivering success over the long-term in an era where ILRI needs near-term demonstrated successes. Others noted that a key value of work in more advanced livestock systems (e.g. Vietnam) is that it enables ILRI to adapt research to other systems (e.g. West Africa). One stakeholder doubted whether fragile states were a wise focus of work (anticipating the potential for funding from donors increasingly linking security and ODA). In full recognition that ILRI can’t do everything, he advised choosing the geographic areas where significant impacts can be illustrated in a shorter time frame, rather than working in countries where systems require longer-term, more intensive interventions.

MONITORING, LEARNING & EVALUATION - More than two thirds of those interviewed identified monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MLE) as a capacity on which ILRI’s success depends, and an area needing investment. Donors facing increasing pressure to articulate the impact of research funding expressed challenges in defending investments to CGIAR centers without clear MLE frameworks, good reporting, and evidence-based impact pathways. This is not an easy fix for an organization operating in ILRI’s space, and the interviewees appreciated the challenges, including multiple donor frameworks asking for different sets of metrics and difficulty in working with impact metrics like ‘number of farmers reached’ when the organization is not an on-the-ground development organization. Still, there are good practices among agricultural development research organizations and these interviews delivered a clear message from stakeholders to invest in the people and processes to improve MLE.

SDGs - Donors interviewed all agreed that clear communication is necessary to map ILRI’s activities, staff, and resources to the SDGs (ILRI has this already). Most also agreed that the SDGs are so broad that this mapping exercise is more for communication than supporting anything operational within the institute. Many partners interviewed noted that their own organizations had mapped activities to SDGs, but had not integrated any subset of the 169 metrics into their reporting processes.

PEOPLE - A strategy is only as good as the talent in the institute and many interviewees complimented ILRI’s proactive approaches to change how the institute hires and manages its talent. Most people who mentioned this topic felt that ILRI is able to compete for talent, with the usual caveats faced by all CGIAR centers (location, security issues and spousal employment). ILRI was also complimented on their creativity in models to engage talent (e.g. joint appointments, etc.).

SUSTAINABLE & APPROPRIATE FUNDING

PLAN FOR DECLINING W1/W2 – Some interviewees talked about how we are in an era where CGIAR centers must strategically revise how they use the CRPs. It was noted that some flagships in CRPs present an excellent vehicle for raising bilateral funds, but in general, there is a realignment needed about the role of CRPs in Centers’ strategies. Whether or not the donor trends discussed above continue, strategic planning focused on resource mobilization that has reasonably skeptical expectations for W1/W2 funding may make the organization more robust in an uncertain donor environment. One stakeholder noted: *‘This idea that CRPs should have full funding is setting expectations too high. ILRI should ask for less. Maybe 20-30% to fund the structure - the strategic research that allows the interactions across the CRP to really work.’*

ILRI was praised for strategic thinking about innovative resource mobilization. Three key tools were identified as critical to future fund-raising strategies: creative partnerships, robust MLE, and additional investment in strategic external communications.

TARGETED GROWTH – Growth at ILRI over the past few years has been seen as positive. There was recognition that this growth included difficult but critical changes to internal systems and human resources. Several interviewees noted, though, that ILRI may want to consider shifting from growth modality to one focused on improving efficiency. One person

advised pursuing only very targeted growth that supports the institute in demonstrating some near-term impacts. Additional comments referred to the stress that growth puts on staff, the risks of many parallel changes in an organization at once, and the significant challenges of changing internal systems in the growth trajectory.

FOCUS ON RISK MITIGATION – Continuing the cautionary theme of this section, other stakeholders noted that the current donor climate warrants a resource mobilization strategy that focuses on risk mitigation. Some specific resource mobilization strategy practices were discussed, like mapping the trajectory of future strategic research areas against expected source of funds (multi-year grant commitments vs. year-by-year political commitments, single donor vs. multiple donors). One stakeholder advised greater attention to anticipating exit strategies for areas funded by single donors: *‘ILRI should be asking - what will we have built to grow the institute if this area of research is not renewed in three years?’*

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS – As noted, innovative partnerships were repeatedly discussed as critical for achieving a solid base of future funding. Despite comments about ILRI’s need to improve how it shows up as a partner, the institute was lauded for the innovation it brings to creating new partnerships.

One interesting discussion noted that when partnerships are created in the integrated sciences, ILRI can be more logically placed at the center of the partnership. This has reputational benefits, brings ILRI closer to illustrations of impact, and has funding implications. Partnerships created in the biosciences, while equally critical, may involve a less central role for ILRI (primarily translation or capacity building) with the lead partner perhaps as an advanced research institute. Partnerships were also discussed as central to solving the problem of how to more strategically approach funding opportunities to expand ILRI’s geographical focus.

GETTING THE SCIENCE RIGHT

INTEGRATED SCIENCES – As noted above, many stakeholders talked about ILRI’s unique place in the landscape of livestock research - discussing where the institute might be *indispensable* and where it could double down to focus on getting results. While there were some diverse views (depending on the interviewee’s background) the ‘Integrated Sciences’ described in the strategy were strongly championed by a majority of stakeholders as the areas where ILRI’s applied research and its ability to interface with practical on-the-ground complexities of systems could become indispensable. Frequently mentioned as critical to future livestock investments from donors were systems-issues related to: food safety, water, nutrition, antimicrobial resistance, and climate change.

BIOSCIENCES – Among interviewees, there were many advocates of ILRI’s work in biosciences, but also some clear cautionary advice. First, many noted that ILRI should be careful to complement existing advanced research institutes, not to try to compete. Some noted that ILRI’s competitors are structurally better suited to more upstream research in terms of funding models, talent, and infrastructure. One stakeholder went as far as to say: *‘ILRI should be a global leader in its systems work, but play a supporting role in biosciences, helping other partners to have higher impact in the field.’* Second, there were cautions about anticipating the rapid pace of change in biosciences. One interviewee noted: *‘Modern methods and technology take a long time to get into ILRI. The staff don’t adopt it easily or fast and the equipment or necessary resources may not be there. Sequencing has moved on a long way from where BecA is now. There are real questions about whether they can remain competitive at the cutting edge of research without making better use of partners.’* Third, there was discussion about tightening up the articulation of the



specific role ILRI plays, and clarifying what ILRI does *not* do. One interviewee, for example, talked about mapping out the structure of a successful poultry breeding program. *'It takes owning the barns to be successful. ILRI shouldn't build poultry housing, it should find moderate-sized private companies that don't have the capacity to do high science in the company, and use NARS to do field testing, customer preferences, and monitoring. But ILRI needs to improve internal controls and processes to process contracts properly to support this model that requires smart partnerships.'*

FEED & FORAGE – As a critical enabler of intensification, feed markets were discussed by many interviewees. Most noted a clear role for ILRI (one that is not being served by CIAT's more narrow expertise in forages). Climate change issues related to feed systems were repeatedly stressed as important for ILRI's strategy. Work on FEAST was praised. Several stakeholders advised caution for ILRI in pursuing product development activities in this field (e.g. development of feed quality diagnostics or new feeds). Product development feedback is further discussed below under the heading 'Commercialization.'

GENDER – One stakeholder noted that the 'women in international development' field is moving in new directions focusing on decision-making of women in households, and how women improve their economic empowerment (rather than, for instance, older views of gender equity in access to inputs). It was generally recognized that we have a very long way to go in this field and that all on-the-ground impacts depend on progress in how we understand gender issues. Several stakeholders commented on the challenges of how to effectively integrate gender expertise into a research organization. A common model is to hire a single gender expert and charge that person with writing the gender strategies for donors and projects, as well as being a resource for the team. One stakeholder noted that this model is practical only when accompanied by significant investment in mandated learning for other staff so that the entire organization improves their understanding of gender issues over time.

CLIMATE CHANGE – Livestock and climate change interactions were discussed by nearly all stakeholders as a core area for ILRI over the next few years. Mitigation was repeatedly discussed. One person noted: *'We need to shift the global debate. It is not whether or not livestock is a good thing. It is a question of how we can use the science to improve the situation. How can we change the feeding systems to make sure less is emitted?'* Another noted: *'Donors and partners and governments are all making commitments for greenhouse gas mitigation, linked to international community mitigation agreements. Specific goals from ILRI around tackling issues in this agenda help align their work to our own national goals.'* At the same time, it was noted that ILRI cannot fight the advocacy battle for livestock's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions alone. As ILRI has been doing, the advice was to partner with global advocates. ILRI provides the evidence, and others advocate. Another wondered whether 'efficiency of resource use' is a filter across all of ILRI's projects. Climate-smart livestock strategies were mentioned repeatedly.

COMMERCIALIZATION – When asked about the research-to-development continuum, stakeholders were remarkably consistent in describing ILRI's core value as applied, translational science. One stakeholder advised ILRI to be wary of moving too far upstream: *'They will never have Nobel laureate laboratories, but they can bring science into problems facing real people, governments, and businesses. ILRI is most needed for doing applied research that is informed by local markets.'*

Many others advised wariness in going too far downstream. The discipline of refraining from development and delivery activities is not easy in a funding environment where donors depend on documented in-country or on-the-ground development impacts. Staying squarely in the translational science depends critically on good, trusted partners at either end of the continuum.

Two main messages in this area came through repeatedly. First, ILRI's science should be more disciplined by downstream factors and filters for potential impact at scale. Many parallels were drawn to private sector pipelines where projects that don't demonstrate significant viability for impact are shut down so resources can be reallocated. This requires in many cases a deep practical understanding of delivery channels for potential innovations and potential private sector partners (of all sizes, including informal grass roots). Some stakeholders felt ILRI was lacking in this area. One person noted: *'ILRI has a university-style process and environment. They need to make it more focused on delivery.'* Another said: *'It is almost as if they haven't updated their thinking to the modern era where the public sector no longer is the delivery channel.'*

The second common message was that ILRI should continue predominately avoiding direct engagement in product development and direct delivery at scale (including delivery of extension), or other downstream functions. If ILRI's primary products are knowledge, data, analysis, evidence, and proofs of concept, then ILRI's job is to use those to

influence partners and structure great partnerships that will move products onward toward delivery. *‘ILRI needs to be more innovative in how it hands off, or carries on being involved in, products.’ But...‘Researchers cannot develop products. They need to transfer them to commercial partners.’ ‘ILRI’s work needs to be directed toward, and informed by, product development, but ILRI should not do the product development.’* Many reasons were given for steering clear of product development. Most prominently, CGIAR centers’ incentives are not aligned to support the adaptation of products to suit rural markets, the necessary recognition of failure and subsequent rapid pivoting of business models, or the ability to pull the plug on a project and reallocate resources to more promising products. Effective product development in rural markets requires all of these, and more.

INFLUENCING DECISION-MAKERS

CONTRIBUTING THE EVIDENCE - Several interviewees appreciated ILRI’s continued role as an independent contributor of evidence, rather than an advocate of particular positions. This was seen as a key distinction for a global research institute. One example highlighted was the debate about the role of livestock and greenhouse gas emissions. In this, a number of interviewees thought ILRI should be ‘less defensive’ in this debate. This defensiveness was seen as more of an advocacy response. One comment urged ILRI to continue to build their reputation as more of an independent arbiter, contributing robust science to the debate.

GLOBAL DEBATES – Livestock was noted as being at the center of a number of global debates that span public and private sectors, as well as developed and developing countries. ILRI’s role in these debates was highlighted as important, but many noted that influence in these debates is more effective in partnership with other voices (e.g. FAO).

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS - Relationships with national governments were discussed frequently in the interviews as a challenging, but high-impact area for ILRI to have influence. Some mentioned continued demand for more practical advisory services for national governments. Others noted ILRI’s success in the Ethiopian Master Livestock Plan and the very large potential impact among African countries for ILRI’s influence as countries continue to refine and operationalize CAADP agricultural investment plans. It was noted that ILRI’s livestock policy work is a critical area of influence.

COMMUNICATIONS – One stakeholder noted that communications strategies for CGIAR centers are more complex than many people recognize. Translating very

technical work into good stories and communicating successes to scientists, donors, aid agencies, governments, and civil society is a challenge. Strategically planning for the best ways to contribute evidence to a wide range of debates, nationally and globally, is yet another. Most interviewees appreciated ILRI’s branding, although several felt the communications materials did a disservice to people participating in the modern reality of livestock systems in developing countries, and that the materials were too focused on somewhat stale images. A good number of interviewees suggested considering a refresh of the communications strategy, to make sure it supports further progress to demonstrate successes and create a sharper institutional identity.

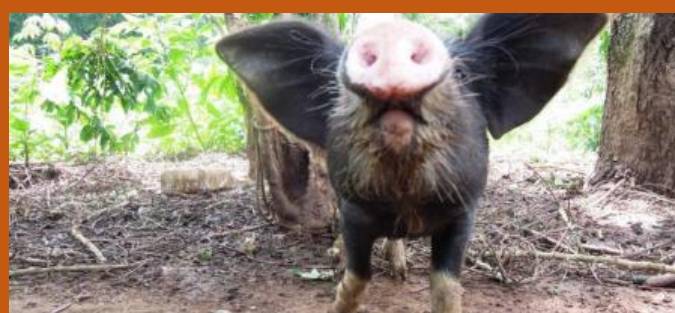
GROW THE CAPACITY

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS – Nearly all interviewees felt strongly that the role of ILRI in training young professionals was critical to long-term shifts in international development. One noted: *‘It’s not the technologies, it’s the people that are transformative. Just think of how many people currently influencing the agriculture sector spent time at ILCA or ILRAD.’*

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT – Many noted difficulties in documenting sufficient evidence of impact for capacity building activities. We are operating in an era where ‘number of people trained’ does not satisfy some donors. We are also in an era where donors are confronted with some expensive failures in capacity building models of the past. We know the problems faced in international development are not solved by more PhDs, but we also know that well-trained leaders, scientists, policymakers, and business people are critical to a country’s agricultural transformation.

None of the interviewees were familiar with ILRI’s final set of metrics referenced as forthcoming in the strategy, so conversations were not specific. But it was noted that there has been some innovative work done over the last decade on how to measure capacity building in ways that reflect the modern needs of donors and partners.

TIGHTER STRATEGY - Some interviewees argued for a much tighter expression in the strategy about where,



how, and why ILRI is focused on building capacity (the 2013 strategy includes references to a large range of beneficiaries from farmers to local and global decision-makers). Some interviewees questioned whether the expansion of capacity building (beyond BecA's role) was better seen as slow-build, with a longer-term strategy that adds more resources into it over time but not as a major short-term priority, but others felt it should remain a priority in the near-term.

SCALABILITY – A couple of interviewees talked about how difficult it is to scale capacity building. By nature, building capacity takes time, thought, and effort. There are few economies of scale. As in the documentation of impact, there are other ways to talk about scale, however, and these may become important to focus the donor community on to ensure continued funding for capacity building.

PARTNERSHIPS

CENTRAL TO THE STRATEGY - Partnerships were mentioned in nearly every interview as critical to ILRI's execution of the current strategy (as the strategy itself calls out). Yet this was the area where ILRI received significant negative feedback from interviewees. Certainly, examples of good and innovative partnerships were cited. These included: the partnership between ILRI and the Tata Trust, the partnership in Vietnam on food safety, and the Centre for Tropical Livestock Genetics and Health. Overall, however, the interviews indicated that ILRI still has a strong reputation among its stakeholders as needing to improve how it shows up as a partner. Feedback about ILRI's partnerships spanned national, international, and private sector partners. One interviewee advised: *'ILRI needs to radically improve how they partner. This includes attitude toward partners, but also the systems used to set up partnerships and run them (contracting, payment, results).'* There were a number of specific issues cited as areas to focus on, including: timeliness, collaborative attitude, delivery, respect for communications protocols of partners, systems to manage finances in partnerships, and realigning expectations with ILRI's position in the agricultural development landscape. There were a number of comments more generally about the CGIAR system related to a continuing reputation for arrogance among CGIAR researchers. It was noted that this works against their own interests in an era that requires collaborative partnerships.

NARS – Although ILRI has been working to change the way it partners with NARS, the interviews reflected a continued poor reputation in this respect. It is possible that some stakeholders are reporting earlier impressions, but this type of comment was brought up by a reasonable number of stakeholders. One noted: *'ILRI shows arrogance in interactions with national partners. They get funding and then go to national programs afterward and say, 'This is what we need you to do,' instead of co-crafting proposals or projects.'*

PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT - Some interviewees talked about having the right processes and people in place to guide partnership creation and management at ILRI. *'Managing partnerships takes a wide range of skills - technical, political, management. ILRI hasn't yet been paying enough attention to partnership management. You can hire real talent to manage partnerships. But so far, they have been less strategic, and more crisis management.'* There was also caution expressed for ILRI to avoid over-systematization in partnership management, noting that this often fails because partnerships are so diverse. Instead, the advice was to focus on building capacity among staff, incentives for staff to manage partnerships better, and putting in place smart, flexible internal processes. The heterogeneity of partnerships means that you have to be prudent in what and how you standardize processes.

UPSTREAM PARTNERS – While stakeholders noted that ILRI has done comparatively better with upstream partnerships, some questioned whether ILRI currently has the right upstream partners: *'Many of ILRI's upstream partnerships are historical or legacy partnerships. There may need to be different partners now. It's worthwhile taking a look across ILRI's big partnerships and evaluating whether they are valuable for future.'*

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWEES

	Name	Organization	Title
1	Ayantunde, Augustine	ILRI	Regional Representative, West Africa
2	Baldwin, Cynthia	UMASS, Amherst	Professor
3	Black, Sam	UMASS, Amherst	Professor
4	Brandenberg, Misja	ILRI	Director Corporate Services
5	Chiverton, Phillip	SIDA	Senior Advisor
6	Djikeng, Appolinaire	ILRI	Director BecA-ILRI Hub
7	Dube, Sikhhalazo	ILRI	Regional Representative, Southern Africa
8	Ehui, Simeon	World Bank	Manager, World Bank's Agriculture Global Practice for Africa
9	Ferrari, Pierre	Heifer International	CEO
10	Gill, Maggie	CGIAR	ISPC Chair
11	Herrero, Mario	CSIRO	Chief Research Scientist and Office of the Chief Executive Science Leader
12	Jeffries, Peter	GALVmed	CEO
13	Juleff, Nick	BMGF	Senior Program Officer
14	Kiwango, Stella	ILRI	Director of People and Organizational Development
15	Le Gall, Francois	World Bank	Senior Advisor Food Safety and Livestock, Agriculture Practice
16	Leyland, Tim	Independent	Consultant
17	Moyo, Siboniso	ILRI	DG's representative, Ethiopia
18	Nguyen, Hung	ILRI	East and South East Asia Regional Representative
19	Nkurmah, Donald	BMGF	Senior Program Officer
	Palmer, Guy	WSU	Professor
21	Paul Schuetz	GIZ	Program Manager
22	Peacock, Christie	SIDAI	CEO
23	Peters, Michael	CIAT	Program Leader Tropical Forages
24	Randolph, Tom	ILRI	Director, Livestock CRP
25	Rey, Bernard	EU	Deputy Head of Unit, Rural Development, Food Security, Nutrition
26	Rota, Antonio	IFAD	Senior Technical Advisor, Livestock and Farming Systems
27	Salt, Jeremy	GALVmed	CSO
28	Schillinger, Dieter	ILRI	Assistant Director General Biosciences
29	Schneider, Fritz	Global Agenda for Sustainable Livestock	Chair
30	Sikosana, Joe	Government of Zimbabwe	Deputy Director, Department of Research & Specialist Services
31	Stür, Werner	ACIAR	Research Program Manager, Livestock Production Systems
32	Tollervey, Alan	DFID	Team Leader, Agriculture
33	V Padmakumar	ILRI	South Asian Regional Representative
34	Wright, Iain	ILRI	Deputy Director General Research (Integrated Sciences)
35	Zerbini, Ercole	Cargill	Global Ruminant Technology Director